

TWO FACES OF INDIRA GANDHI

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Indira Gandhi—Revolution in Restraint

Two Faces of Indira Gandhi

Uma Vasudev

Preface

"Everybody is speaking the truth, but at the wrong time!" exclaimed a Congress leader at the meeting of the All India Congress committee, in a post mortem session after their astounding defeat. That just about sums it up.

I was shocked at the truth. It was easy for those opposed to Indira Gandhi from the very start to believe the worst. It was difficult for those who had faith in her to face it.

The period till 1972 was the theme of my first book on Indira Gandhi. The period since then, which initiated the trends leading to the emergency, forms the theme of this one. Between the two books, as between one face of Indira Gandhi and the other, lies a lost connection.

Indira Gandhi is not a simple woman; nor was the office she held. Each issue which has cropped up during the writing of this book merits a separate analysis. I have sought to relate them to one driving passion of Indira Gandhi, that may bind them together. Politics? Love? Ideology? Fear? Ego? Motherhood? Ambition? What it is depends on where the reader looks. For

me, it was like unravelling a mystery that baffled her nearest colleagues as well as her profoundest enemies.

I have based this book on the live but historic material provided by the top leadership of the Congress and its workers. They are perhaps the only ones to know the truth about Indira Gandhi.

I wish to thank them all for talking to me at length and with the perception that gave the clue to what happened to Mrs Gandhi. As her old colleague and political stalwart Kamlapati Tripathi says, "Here was a person who was flying in the air and is now in the dust. . . adulated in the capitals of the world, but now abused by the very persons she created out of nothing." The story becomes both human and political.

The name of Jayaprakash Narayan has been left with sub-conscious oversight among the list of names referred to as the opposition elite which was still in jail in June 1976. Narayan was released on parole in November 1975, and the rest at varying intervals. Probably the sub-conscious worked here all the way through, for nobody could refer to the opposition elite without including his name.

I am grateful to my parents and my sister for their faith, to LK for the ready help, facts and material, to the little Kamia for her patience—and above all to the absent Raka for giving me the determination.

Sudarshan Seth and Neelima Goel spent long hours finding details for the exhaustive notes which were planned to form virtually a short, parallel history throughout the book.

Hari Ram Jindal did a stoic job with the typing, for which I owe him thanks too.

The rest is legion.

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UMA VASUDEV

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For a name to live by
RAKA

1 The Men in Her Politics

Sitting out in the political cold in the hills of Pachmarhi in June 1976, six hundred miles away from India's capital, Pandit Dwarka Prasad Mishra,¹ Indira Gandhi's master tactician and confidant in her battle for intra-party supremacy in 1967-69, related an anecdote to an administrator friend calling on him: "There was a political prisoner I knew in the thirties who was so fond of his pet cat that he was allowed to keep it with him in his cell. One day his nerves cracked and he beat the cat blue. The cat sat cowering in a corner, not knowing where to turn, for the cell door was locked and it was trapped. Each time its one-time protector would come near, it would shrink against the wall and whimper. The jailor heard the cries and came running. As soon as the cell door flew open, the cat, instead of rushing out, leapt at her owner's throat in such ferocious anger that he nearly died before they could release its grip. The moral of the story is," said Mishra as

¹D.P. Mishra was a controversial political figure in Madhya Pradesh politics, whose rise and fall as chief minister determined political alignments in the state. Now seventy-six years old, he came back to Delhi after Mrs Gandhi's defeat to play a crucial role in her battle for post-election survival.

his tiny eyes gleamed behind his glasses, "that if you want to hit the enemy, you must leave a way out for him. Otherwise his despair can make him a killer."

The reference was Maoist but the application was nearer home. It was one year since Indira Gandhi had declared in internal emergency in India on 26 June 1975. The opposition elite was still in jail, including such big names as Jayaprakash Narayan, Morarji Desai, Atal Behari Vajpayee, Raj Narain, L.K. Advani, and Piloo Mody—together with men from her own Congress Party like Chandra Shekhar, Mohan Dharia, Krishan Kant, Ram Dhan, and P.N. Singh. Censorship of the media was still in force. Argument and dissent were mouthed in whispers, while rumour aggravated fear. The politician and the intellectual subsisted in uneasy confrontation, the area of direct knowledge became narrower and narrower, and truth seemed to have more than the seven colours of the rainbow.

Obviously, Mishra thought "Indiraji" was pushing the situation too hard.

But by then he was, in many ways, too far away from her to communicate either his protest or his apprehensions. His rapport with the prime minister had broken in 1972 when he found himself being cleverly edged out of the orbits of confidence. It had been a typical manoeuvre in which Indira Gandhi's lieutenants did for her what she had wanted done. There had never been so many dropouts from the coterie of confidants until then. What happened to him set the pattern. Why it happened provides some clues to the later metamorphosis of her personality, and that of the Indian political system itself.

Mishra was chief minister of Madhya Pradesh from 1965 to 1967. Later resident in Delhi, he was one of the few people in the period between 1967 and 1972 who acquired the reputation of being close to the prime minister. That in itself became one factor of disqualification in her eyes. The second was the growing feeling in the capital that Mishra was becoming ambitious enough to aspire for home ministership in the union cabinet. That was reason enough to cut him down to size. The third was that he was prepared for a direct confrontation with the communists at a time when Mrs Gandhi was going through a very enthusiastic Left phase. Anybody who differed became suspect.

When the central election committee was selecting candidates

for assembly elections in 1972, Mishra made it very clear that he was opposed to Congress supporting Sudhir Mukherjee, the communist candidate from Raipur. He even suggested there be a rule that no communist candidate be encouraged in areas positioned with vital installations. Raipur, for instance, was the district adjoining Durg where the Bhilai steel plant was in operation. "That is when these people came to know that I was against them," affirms Mishra. "Instead of taking advice from former friends, she had begun to listen to Kumaramangalam.² But where was the need to go out of the party to get leftist thinkers? We had them all—even Chavan,³ earlier, and there were young, enthusiastic people like Chandra Shekhar.⁴ Mishra thought her image was being denigrated by communist propaganda spreading at the time that she did whatever they told her.

But there was a fourth factor. By 1972 Mishra was beginning to get suspicious of Haryana Chief Minister Bansi Lal's⁵ role. He warned Indira Gandhi that he feared the rugged *jat*'s intelligence network spreading its tentacles into her own house. "For a politician truth and facts are impossible to disregard.

²Mohan Kumaramangalam, the tall, slim, suave card-holder of the Communist Party of India, joined the Congress and became union minister of steel and mines in Mrs Gandhi's cabinet. A clever political theorist, he died in an air crash in 1973 at the age of fifty-eight.

³Yeshwantrao Balwantrao Chavan is the sixty-five years old strong man of Maharashtra, who has kept his hold in his home state through years of power at the Centre under Nehru, Shastri, and Indira Gandhi. His heavy looks belie an ability for perceptive analysis, and once he begins to talk, the range is vast. He was minister for external affairs till the Congress downfall on 20 March 1977.

⁴Born in 1927, Chandra Shekhar, the lanky, bearded, firebrand formed Indira Gandhi's group of radicals within the Congress in 1969 called the Young Turks. He belongs to eastern UP, edits *Young Indian* (a fortnightly journal), and was jailed as a Congressman, along with Jayaprakash Narayan, on 25 June. He was recently elected chairman of the newly formed Janata Party.

⁵A ruthless *jat* from Haryana, Bansi Lal wears spectacles which cannot hide the rugged handsomeness of his features. His political style as chief minister was aimed at fulfilling two purposes—to give Haryana, as well as himself, a place in the sun. He has a total disregard for the means he employs to achieve his objectives; he shuns theory, and prefers to steam-roll through men and ideas. A man whose blind loyalty can be as dangerous as his total hostility, Bansi Lal was union minister of defence till 20 March 1977.

She and I had one agreement. 'I'll tell you the most unpleasant things,' I said to her, 'but I'll never ask why you haven't done this or that.' When I realized," said Mishra, "that unpleasant facts were becoming unwelcome, I left."

Not the Allahabad high court judgement on 12 June 1975, which placed her election into jeopardy,⁶ nor the emergency on 26 June 1975 which brought her democratic credibility into question, nor even the political birth with that of Sanjay Gandhi as the prime ministerial alter ego, were the watersheds in the life and politics of Indira Gandhi. It was 1971, the year of her own birth as political leader, when she stepped out of the Nehru shadow, when she felt she could deal with men—like Mishra—who had served under her father in her own right, according to her own needs, and according to her own style. "I would support her right up to the split in 1969 completely. Before that she was not her own master in the organization or the Lok Sabha," said D.P. Mishra. But one can carry that support right through the consolidation of her party in 1970, the calculated victory over the question of Bangladesh, to the fantastic mandate of the 1971 parliamentary elections and the assembly elections in 1972.

But there were two ways for her to react to this achievement. She could have gained such confidence that it could have made her generous and large hearted. Instead, she became jealous and fearful.

"If she had turned the other way at that point she could have been like Nehru, I suppose," I said in a discussion later.

⁶Justice Jag Mohan Lal Sinha of the Allahabad high court held Indira Gandhi guilty of corrupt practices in her election to the Lok Sabha from Rae Bareilly in 1971 (on a petition filed by her opponent, Raj Narain, which took four years to be decided). Sinha cited the use of "gazetted officers of the state government of UP," under section 123(7) of the *Representation of People's Act* and "obtaining the assistance of Mr Yashpal Kapoor, a gazetted officer in the government of India holding the post of officer on special duty in the prime minister's secretariat for the furtherance of her election prospects," as a corrupt practice under section 123(7) of the same act, two reasons which disqualified her from holding elective office for a period of six years. Sinha then granted her a stay of twenty days to enable her to appeal to the supreme court.

Indira Gandhi had, in that election, defeated Raj Narain by over one lakh votes and led the Congress to a massive victory. The Congress won 361 seats in the Lok Sabha out of a total of 524.

"Greater than Nehru," said Chandrajit Yadav,⁷ former minister of steel in Indira's ministry, "but she never had the principled approach and humanism of Nehru."

In Nehru, the confidence was inborn. In Indira, it was the insecurity. Nothing else explains the ideological drift of the years after a solid political achievement like Bangladesh on the international front, and the support that became manifestly hers on the domestic one. Contained in both these successes was the germ of fear. Suddenly there was too much at stake for her, and it had to be jealously protected. From 1969 to 1972 she had little to lose because she was fighting a cause. From 1972 to 1977 she had everything to lose because she was safeguarding the establishment.

Indira Gandhi's style did not change. It was her emphasis which did.

"Mrs Gandhi did plan towards central authority but not towards dictatorship," analyzes Chandra Shekhar, now president of the Janata Party, but at that time an emerging Young Turk in the prime minister's effort to fashion a leftist orientation. "She had a peculiar sense of insecurity. The first symptoms were there long before, when she began to move away from Ashok Mehta.⁸ Soon after 1967 she became suspicious of people who had a standing in public life. When the cabinet was formed Ashok Mehta was not willing to join at first because she did not consult her own colleagues, even about their portfolios. She's always playing with three or four ideas at the same time. Then she sees which one is the most feasible and acts upon it. If she has to take an unpleasant decision, it is not on ethical grounds. In the presidential elections in 1969, I was in favour of supporting Mr

⁷Forty-seven years old, Chandrajit Yadav is an eloquent politician who graduated into the Congress from the inner enclave of the Communist Party of India, and became a leading figure of the Left group within the Congress, besides its general secretary. He was union minister of steel and mines till 20 March 1977.

⁸Ashok Mehta sports the intellectual look with thick glasses and a ~~not~~ well-trimmed beard. He came in from the Socialist Party to become the ~~leading~~ economic theoretician of the Congress. He formed a close political ~~thrust~~ with Chavan and Indira Gandhi, till gradual disenchantment led him ~~fast~~ to opt for the Congress Organization.

Giri⁹ from the beginning, but she preferred to prevaricate outwardly."

"It started from the time of the split,"¹⁰ says Dinesh Singh¹¹ also, former foreign minister in Indira's cabinet and now a member of the Janata Party. "My idea was that she should not have accepted Sanjeeva Reddy.¹² We could have taken the same decision without her agreeing to his candidature. I was opposed to the split. Then, where was the point in throwing out Morarji?¹³ He had accepted being number two to her; he was disciplined enough to work with her whatever his ambitions.

⁹Labour leader Varaha Giri Venkata Giri was union minister, vice-president, then elected president of India in 1969. He stood as an independent, but with the implicit support of Indira Gandhi against Sanjeeva Reddy, the official Congress nominee, who was being supported by the old party bosses. "Use your conscience!" called Mrs Gandhi to the electorate and Giri's victory proved the supremacy of her support.

¹⁰The Congress Party split occurred over the question of Giri's election. But the real issues were Mrs Gandhi's bid for total control, the Left-Right confrontation, and the declared aim to give a fresh image to the Congress. The Syndicate, as the group of big bosses were called, broke apart to form the rival Congress Organization, which they kept insisting was the real Congress. But the majority in the party, and in the country as a whole, stood by Indira Gandhi.

¹¹The raja of Kalakankar (a princely state in UP), fifty-two years old Dinesh Singh lost his privy purse and privileges like the rest of India's feudal order in 1969 in one of the acts of parliament which, along with the nationalization of banks, contributed to Mrs Gandhi's reputation as the leader of the masses. She gave Dinesh Singh the top assignment of minister of external affairs in 1969, only to bring him down from that position later. He joined the Janata Party in May 1977.

¹²Sanjeeva Reddy, now sixty-four, was Congress president, Lok Sabha speaker, and India's presidential candidate in 1969. The wheel has turned full circle.

¹³Morarji Desai, the stoic puritan from Gujarat, who was Nehru's colleague and went on to become finance minister and deputy prime minister under Indira Gandhi in 1976. There was an old rivalry, keen and continuous. She threw him out in 1969. He remained leader of the Congress Organization in parliament and joined with Jayaprakash Narayan on the issues of the dissolution of assemblies and the "total revolution" agitation of 1974. He was arrested on 25 June 1975 and came out nineteen months later to fulfil the aim he never gave up. He had the satisfaction of seeing Indira Gandhi and her party routed in the elections in 1977 and his own position as prime minister secured by consent in the Janata Party. Morarji Desai is eighty-one, as spartan as ever, except for a weakness for Swiss chocolates. In jail he subsisted on dry fruit and milk.

His regime has not yet shown the expected puritanical tendencies; his years, it seems, have mellowed him.

I was in America at the time. When I came back I told her I didn't agree with this decision. The Congress (O) was dubbed a rightist group, but when did Morarji ever block any legislation? It was to assert her supremacy, that was the reason."

"Why should you have continued to support her then?" I asked Dinesh Singh.

"Indiraji was still fresh, people responded to the generation question. You can take one wrong decision—after all, it was her right to make that choice—but when she represented modern trends, argued for changes in the country and a movement towards socialism, you had to support her."

Dinesh Singh too was ultimately eased out, partly for the same reasons. She had placed him in an exalted position as foreign minister in 1969-70, out of proportion to the political backing he could muster. However, she started suspecting him when he tried to organize a base for himself in UP with the help of the other Rajput MLAs. Himself a member of the Kitchen Cabinet, an earlier version of the later caucus, he came into clash with the one-man centre of power who was functioning non-officially on her behalf even then—her private secretary, Yashpal Kapoor,¹⁴ full of bounce, bluster and loyalty, who exercised an influence which percolated down from ministerial levels to the very roots of the Congress organization. Even as early as 1963, says Kapoor, there were attempts at creating misunderstandings amongst her close supporters. Dinesh Singh, for instance, rang him up one day.

"Kapoor, you and I are in such a position we have to be careful where we go, who we meet," warned the ex-raja of Kalakankar

"What on earth?

¹⁴Born in 1929, Yashpal Kapoor hails from Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province of what is now Pakistan, and came to Delhi in 1945. He used to sell newspapers and sit at a shop in Subzi Mandi selling vegetables in the mornings and evenings. During the day he worked as a special police officer. "In 1946 I became an active Seva Dal member," he recalls "I used to carry a flag and a bugle through which I called to people to donate four annas to the

for Congress affairs when she became prime minister. The rank he attained was that of under secretary. Since he became member of the Rajya Sabha, his influence waned, his place being taken up by his cousin, R.K. Dhawan.

"It seems you were found dead drunk at the Ashoka Hotel!"

Till then, says Kapoor, he had never been to the Ashoka Hotel. In 1967, when Indira Gandhi came back as prime minister after the election, Dinesh Singh and Inder Gujral,¹⁵ the then minister of state for communications and parliamentary affairs, began to play him down. "They certainly tried to cut me after that. If the PM suggested that I could be sent to talk to somebody, like I did before, they'd say 'No, no, he's only a private secretary, why not send another man?'" All three continued to operate in fitful collaboration till Kapoor found an occasion to hit back by getting evidence of Dinesh Singh's supposedly conspiratorial ambitions. He tried desperately one day to locate him on behalf of the prime minister and finally got him on the telephone late in the evening.

"Maharaj," said Kapoor, "Where does one find you? We haven't been able to get you anywhere today. We've been calling you several times from here."

"Are (alas), who calls whom till he has a strong base," rejoined Dinesh Singh cynically, and then added, "I have to build some support for myself in UP now."

Dinesh Singh's reputation for being close to Indira Gandhi held a connotation different from that of Mishra's, but the aspirations to power became just as suspect. Kapoor presumably took the opportunity to warn her against Dinesh cornering the vital, most populous prime ministerial ground of UP, from where all of India's prime ministers had come till then. Perhaps also, the consciousness of her being a woman worked psychologi-

¹⁵Inder Kumar Gujral, fifty-seven years old, comes from a family of politicians. His father was a member of the Pakistan parliament and after partition, was given a seat in lieu of this in the Punjab. Inder Gujral was a member of the All India Students Federation, the student communist wing in Lahore. He joined Congress only to be imprisoned in the Quit India movement. In Delhi, however, he won his way up through the vice-presidentship of the New Delhi municipal committee, and established contacts with Nehru and Indira through the art world. Satish Gujral, his famous artist brother, was the first to have been granted repeated sittings by Nehru and Indira during 1956-57. When Satish completed Indira's portrait he remarked to Pandit Nehru that he feared the latter would not hang it on the wall in his house, as lots of friends had commented that Satish had made Indira look too ruthless. "An artist's job is to unmask the truth, not mask it," Nehru had said. "I think what you have done is right."

cally at least in one respect, despite her repeated assertions that she should always be thought of "as a person," for she certainly dropped the political men in her life with impunity.

The third factor which Dinesh Singh had in common with Mishra was that by arguing in favour of retaining Morarji Desai in the cabinet, he immediately got himself an anti-Left colouring. He had no occasion at that time to offend her with possible warnings on Sanjay's role. But in 1970 his status was devalued when he was given the less prestigious ministry of industrial development and internal trade, and when he was finally dropped from the cabinet in 1971. In fact the coldness was so palpable and the confrontation so tense that he was suspended from the party and expected to be expelled from the Congress on an issue for which he had to almost offer an apology.

Inder Kumar Gujral was again picked by Indira Gandhi as a politically non-based entity from the vice-presidency of the New Delhi municipal committee, because of his personal allegiance to her when she was minister of information and broadcasting in Shastri's cabinet, and also later, in the dramatic struggle for power against Morarji Desai. Gujral is a liberal, slow moving, but imaginative man who thinks in terms of concepts. The media is his medium. In 1965-66, he and Romesh Thapar, the editor of *Seminar*, used to work out plans to create media consciousness as a broad policy measure, and feed her with their ideas. That was the time when, as minister of information and broadcasting, Mrs Gandhi came up with her one-hundred crore rupee scheme for television and met with various hurdles on finance allocations because Shastri did not want her to grow too big. However, she instituted the Chanda Committee to work out the possibility of creating an autonomous corporation for All India Radio, as part of her repeated affirmations that she wanted diversity of expression. "As soon as she became prime minister," recalls Inder Gujral, "she made it very clear that AIR should function as a government medium."

By then Gujral had himself been appointed minister of information and broadcasting by Mrs Gandhi. He went on to make the radio a campaign instrument of such force in the crucial presidential election of 1969 that it virtually controlled the outcome in Giri's—and therefore Mrs Gandhi's—favour. It was an image-building exercise patterned on the ruthless, soul-contri-

tioning efficiency of western methods; as one politician admits, it "virtually hypnotized society." Those who did not shout a slogan felt left out, or were edged out. Gujral was termed the Gobbles of the Indian scene much before Vidya Charan Shukla¹⁶ earned this encomium years later in 1975, and All India Radio began to be called All Indira Radio by the opposition within and outside the Congress.

But Indira Gandhi came out for the vast majority of the Indian public as the epitome of the democratic Left.

"In any history of this period," comments a colleague of Gujral (now on the opposite side of the fence), "Gujral is one man who can be held responsible for creating her. But even he was brought down!"

Indira Gandhi had no reason to fear Gujral. But there were complaints that he was appearing too often on television himself, and building his own image. Besides, he had continued his association with Dinesh Singh who, by 1971, was out, and out of favour. Finally, Gujral was beginning to play it cool—politically—with the medium after 1969, and not doing what she wanted faithfully enough. Perhaps having won her the battle over the media in 1969, he wanted to live it down and give non-political creative effort a natural boost. As a result he was turned out of broadcasting and appointed minister of state for housing.

The choice of ministry had a background—which reveals that Indira forgets nothing. When she first wanted to induct Gujral into the government in 1967, she had asked him which ministry he would prefer. "Anything but housing," he had replied. Gujral did not want to be associated with any position in which he could be blamed for favouring Satish Gujral, his famous artist

¹⁶Vidya Charan Shukla, fifty, tall, and vain, has grown into politics with power as his background. His father, Ravi Shankar Shukla, was chief minister of Madhya Pradesh in Nehru's time, as was his elder brother, Shyama Charan Shukla, under Mrs Gandhi's rule. Vidya Charan became minister of state for defence production in Mrs Gandhi's government. Power was so neatly divided between the two brothers in the state and at the Centre that Mrs Gandhi began to think of removing one of them from the position of eminence. With the emergency, however, she felt it necessary to put Vidya Charan Shukla in charge of the ministry of information and broadcasting, so that the media could be handled with the force that Gujral could not, or was not, inclined to use. Vidya Charan is also referred to as *Very Chalu Shukla* for his way with women!

brother, whose possible contracts for sculpting murals on public buildings would somehow involve his ministry. Mrs Gandhi had not asked the reason, but had obviously concluded that Gujral disliked housing. When the time came to punish him, she chose the same ministry for him. He thus had to join as minister of state for works and housing in 1971. Within one year, however, on 24 July 1972, Gujral came a cropper.

The over six feet tall, elegant yogi with the burnished brown body and the naked chest swathed in a milk-white *dhoti*, walked into Gujral's office one day.

"There's a file pending with you about my request for additional property for my yogashram," said the swami.

"Yes, I'm sorry, we cannot do anything about it," replied Gujral.

"Either you give me the land or I'll see you're out of the ministry by tomorrow!" warned the swami.

"It's difficult," said Gujral, "there are rules"

The next day, Gujral got his orders to quit and rejoin information and broadcasting. Things were never the same again between him and Mrs Gandhi.

Indira Gandhi's reliance on the non-traditional politician, preferably without a base, and therefore, an unquestioning political dependant, and the personalization of political functioning which evolved through the use of one person known as her special confidant were attributes of her style much before they became factors of crisis during the emergency. Yashpal Kapoor was a pre-emergency phenomenon, from whom his father's sister's son, Rajinder Kumar Dhawan,¹⁷ merely took over. The role, however, was identical.

¹⁷Rajinder Kumar Dhawan is from Chanyot in Sargodha, now in Pakistan. An alert, dapper young man of forty, he went through all the rigours of partition. In 1947 he and his family came to Delhi as refugees and stayed with the Kapoors. In 1957 he joined All India Radio as stenographer. When he passed the UPSC examination, he was assigned the Railways, but joined, instead, as personal assistant to Mrs Gandhi when she was chairman of the New York world fair authority. He continued as her PA when she became minister of information and broadcasting, remaining to become her additional private secretary; in this capacity he earned a reputation almost akin to Kapoor's earlier,

One can, in fact, trace the pattern further back into the Nehru era, when M.O. Mathai marched into Anand Bhavan¹⁸ in Allahabad, one day in 1946. Carrying a bag and a trunkful of papers, Mathai offered his services free to Jawaharlal Nehru, then only a private citizen. "I have enough to eat and live by," said the man from Kerala, "I don't want any money." His efficiency as a stenographer won Nehru over completely, while his devotion to him when he became India's first prime minister, brought in the power. Barring three of four ministers who walked into Nehru's room without reserve, the others went through Mathai, and sometimes only to him, to get their work done. Mathai would be at his table in a room at Teen Murti House¹⁹ by 8 am; he would go to office with Nehru in the car, come back with him, and be available at any time the buzzer went, right till 12.30 or 1 am, until Nehru himself retired. Uncompromising in the meticulousness with which he matched timings with the prime minister, Mathai was equally fearless about ticking him off for the vagaries of his colleagues and relatives—and even for the prime minister's own lapses. He once sent Nehru a note pointing out that his own sister, Vijayalaxmi Pandit,²⁰ while on an economy

as her right hand man during the emergency. "The best period of one's life," says Dhawan, "is between twenty-three and forty. That I've spent here!" He resigned from government service on 21 March and continues to work for Mrs Gandhi in her new capacity as private citizen.

¹⁸Anand Bhavan, the palatial home of the Nehrus in Allahabad which Mrs Gandhi has bequeathed to the nation.

¹⁹Teen Murti House, the imposing residence of the British commanders-in-chief, which became the residence of India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. It is now a museum which draws hundreds of curious tourists every day. The compound outside houses the Nehru Museum and the Nehru Memorial Library.

²⁰The beautiful *Nan* to her brother Jawaharlal Nehru who was twelve years her senior, Vijayalaxmi Pandit became minister in UP in the Congress ministries in 1937. She was India's first woman high commissioner and ambassador to the UK, US, and the USSR, the first woman president of the United Nations general assembly, and governor of Maharashtra. Her brilliant career petered out into a cynical hostility towards her niece who, as prime minister, refused to forgive her aunt's treatment of Kamala, her mother; Indira never forgot the past. Vijayalaxmi had to cool her heels—politically—and she finally decided to retire. She came in to support the new opposition in 1977 at a critical point in the anti-Indira wave, which gave a moral boost to the movement.

ticket for a private visit home from London (where she was high commissioner), made the airline vacate three seats in a row for her. "This is very wrong," wrote Mathai loftily to the prime minister. On another occasion when Nehru appointed Krishna Menon minister without portfolio, Mathai called it unfair in a note to the prime minister, saying that the appointment had had a very demoralizing effect on Menon. He even chastised the prime minister for talking too long to a lady at a reception because "it was not done" for a prime minister to give too much importance to any single individual.

But Mathai did not function independent of his environment as messenger, emissary, negotiator and conciliator, as Kapoor and Dhawan did under Mrs Gandhi. Though there were rumblings in the political and administrative cadres about the importance of Mathai, there was less bitterness because political or administrative authority itself was not questioned.

It is only when the system and the hierarchies get a buffeting that a subversive strain begins to run through governance and weakens its sinews. Such was Mrs Gandhi's reliance on Kapoor that at one point he could function with more authority than a state chief minister, or at least he was in a position to make or mar the image of a politician in the eyes of the prime minister. He could not get off cheaply himself, because, as in the case of Gujral and Dinesh Singh, when they could feed her with their own interpretations directly, he had to suffer in consequence. But he did contribute to Dinesh Singh's discomfiture and gradually, Gujral too found himself at a discount.

But who was this swami? Where had he come from? What hold could he have on the prime minister to influence her in changing the portfolios of her ministerial colleagues—or even induct others, like L.N. Mishra²¹ at one point, and that too with such promptness?

²¹Short, fat and rotund, with a neck lost in folds of flesh, Lalit Narain Mishra was brought into the limelight to offset Jagjivan Ram's influence in Bihar. Mishra was one of those who apparently did all he could for Maruti. Close to both mother and son, he became one of the inner coterie. He was union minister of commerce when he was assassinated in a bomb blast at Samastipur on 2 January 1975. From then on, Mrs Gandhi used the example of Mishra's death to point out the continuing conspiracies to destroy her and her friends.

It was in the year 1957. Indira had become a member of the Central Social Welfare Board and apportioned responsibility for the hill areas from Jammu and Kashmir to Himachal and the Kulu valley. She was on tour and decided to take a week's rest in a place called Shikargah, near Pahalgam. She was with her two sons, Rajiv and Sanjay. Yashpal Kapoor accompanied her. It was a quiet, secluded, beautiful day. She was playing with the boys, then only ten and twelve. Kapoor was sitting on a large stone some distance away. Clap, clap, clap, he heard wooden sandals behind him. He turned and saw a straight-backed, muslin-clad swami with a long beard walking past into the beautiful surroundings. Later he saw him following them on horseback. My God, thought Kapoor, he looks like Christ.

The swami stopped him. "I'd like to meet her," he said.

"No," said Kapoor, "she's not meeting anyone. She's here for a rest."

"What did he want?" Indira asked Kapoor. He told her.

"Well, why not?" she remarked. "What politics could he discuss?"

So Kapoor fixed the appointment.

It was Swami Dharendra Brahmachari. Suddenly, from nowhere, out of the mountains she loved. He talked of matters far removed from the political whirl of Delhi familiar to her as her father, the prime minister's official hostess. He began teaching her sons simple exercises in yoga even in Shikargah. In Delhi he became a frequent visitor at Teen Murti House and eventually gave yoga lessons to Pandit Nehru and Indira herself.

Swami Dharendra was also a friend of Jagjivan Ram²² at the

²²Jagjivan Ram, born in 1908 in Arrah (Bihar), has held uninterrupted office in the government at the Centre since 1946, and as he told me once, "There's hardly a ministry I haven't had experience of!" He has been the thorn in Mrs Gandhi's side, despite his manifest support to her, because the prestige and backing he commands in parliament and in the Harijan community could not be discounted. He has a reputation for efficiency and extreme political shrewdness. He left the Congress on 2 February 1977, leading a party revolt against Mrs Gandhi within the Congress, which led to the formation of the Congress for Democracy and its final merger with the Janata on 5 May 1977. He is now union minister of defence.

Ram's swarthy body and dark, glistening face combine with a cool, calculated judgement that still keeps everyone guessing, and certainly fooled Mrs Gandhi in her greatest crisis. But it did not get him the prime ministership he wanted.

time, but relations soon turned sour! He was allotted government accommodation at 1 Jantar Mantar Road. When compelled to give that up, he set up his yoga centre in a house in Defence Colony. While attending an international conference in Delhi, a Russian team of doctors visited the Defence Colony establishment and was vastly impressed with his work there. The swami set up a trust for his yogashram, with—according to Yashpal Kapoor—JP, Jagjivan Ram, Naval Tata²³ and others as trustees, and Morarji as patron. In 1968, Morarji was deputy prime minister, also holding finance, but he refused to sanction an area of one and a half acres in the heart of New Delhi for the elaborate yogashram planned by the swami. In 1969, Indira dismissed Morarji, held finance herself for a year, and the swami got his land. In the 1971 elections, the grounds of the ashram were dotted with a convoy of jeeps and Sanjay Gandhi confiscated the camera of a press photographer whom he found trying to take pictures.

Politics had become the peripheral edge of the swami's mystique. So had his public image.

Ousted because of the swami, but back to his favourite ministry, Gujral remained chastened and uncertain. He also began to be needled by an ex-communist-turned-Congress combine of Kumaramangalam's men, including Nandini Satpathy,²⁴ who wanted control of such a vital area as communications. He began clutching at straws for survival. The swami appeared in regular half-hour television shows teaching yoga. But Mrs Gandhi once annoyed, is as deceptive as a running stream—all ripple and flow on the surface, but still and immune deep inside.

Gujral was already in conflict with Mrs Gandhi's new inner conclave when 20 June 1975 brought him under that spell of special displeasure exercised by Sanjay Gandhi during the emergency, and against which there was no court of appeal for a

²³Naval Tata belongs to the business house of the Tatas.

²⁴Nandini Satpathy, only forty-seven, is a dark, petite woman with chiselled features, a flashing smile, and an energy for politics. She was a member of the Communist Party of India but joined the Congress in 1952, rose to become a favourite of Mrs Gandhi, won the charge of deputy information and broadcasting minister, and then a minister of state. She became chief minister of Orissa in 1974 but finally lost the battle for Indira Gandhi's confidence and had to resign on 16 December 1976. She became founder member of the Congress for Democracy.

number of people. Sanjay had become the organizing spirit behind the rallies, the poster campaign, and the massive propaganda initiative that hypnotized even the Congress leadership into raising a battle cry against the Allahabad high court judgement.

Sanjay began where Gujral had left off in 1969. Ironically enough, Gujral was at the receiving end of retribution in 1975. The day after the Boat Club rally²⁵ addressed by the prime minister in New Delhi—organized on a gigantic scale to prove her hold on the public—there was a belligerent phone call from Sanjay to Gujral, his mother's minister. Why, he asked shrilly, was the rally not relayed directly on television? Gujral swallowed his pride and replied quietly that he would check up.

The rule was that political party rallies were never relayed on television, though there had been exceptions since 1971 on the direct orders of the then director general. This time, Gujral got the report, no request or demand had been made to the TV centre. In any case all such decisions were taken at meetings in the ministry attended by the prime minister's adviser, Sharada Prasad. However, all the prime minister's speeches at the roundabout near her house, where daily rallies were held throughout that fortnight, began to be covered. Mrs Gandhi was still annoyed. She thought the camera angles of shots were taken to show her at a deliberate disadvantage, and no action was being taken on that.

Having once flouted its own rule so openly, the media ministry found itself in a quandary. The opposition were organizing their rally on 25 June and Jayaprakash Narayan²⁶ was to address it.

²⁵The Boat Club rally, organized on the grounds facing Rashtrapati Bhavan, had an estimated fifteen lakhs of people listening to Prime Minister Indira Gandhi that day. For the first time she was accompanied on the dias by her two sons, Rajiv and Sanjay. "I have served my country since my childhood and I shall keep doing it till my last breath," said Mrs Gandhi. "The real issue is whether the country will follow the socialistic policies that were launched four years ago." She also said that forces both inside and outside the country were at work to liquidate her.

²⁶Age has not withered the rebellious spirit of seventy-four years old Jayaprakash Narayan, who came in from Marxist belief to join the Congress Party, and raised a revolt to form the Congress Socialist Party with Ram Manohar Lohia, Yusuf Meherally, Minoo Masani, Ashok Mehta, and Achyut Patwardhan. That was when he wanted Nehru, who was thirty-two years old, to lead the

P.C. Chatterjee, the director general, decided it should be covered. The minister called a meeting which was attended by, among others, Professor P.N. Dhar, the prime minister's principal private secretary, and N.K. Mukerjee, the home secretary. Gujral explained the problem, then turned to Mukerjee, who said coolly: "I think Professor Dhar can advise." Dhar thought for a minute. "This is a media problem. The media should tackle it." "What should we do then?" Gujral asked the director general. "I think it should be covered," he answered.

He suggested they could take certain shots of JP addressing the meeting, and of the procession at various points, but avoid misleading the viewers with exaggerated shots either way.

This was only the beginning of Gujral's woes. On 23 June the supreme court granted Mrs Gandhi the stay order, but with certain conditions. She could function as prime minister till the supreme court's judgement, but she could not vote in parliament. AIR's correspondent posted there rushed through with the news for immediate broadcast in English, which gave an optimistic slant by saying "Mrs Gandhi remains Prime Minister." For the Hindi news at 4 o'clock AIR took the Press Trust of India version, which gave the conditions and conveyed a different impression. This brought an angry demand from the PM's house. Sanjay wanted all news broadcast scripts to be shown to him first. Another complaint reached the prime minister—it said that Gujral had no influence with foreign media at all and that BBC had broadcast a very damaging interpretation.

"The PM would like to see you," came a terse call from Dhawan to Gujral.

Before going, Gujral checked up and found that a Pakistani news broadcast had been mistaken for the BBC one. He saw Mrs Gandhi, explaining that nobody could be expected to have the influence that he had. She calmed down a bit. But when Gujral reached her house, Sanjay came storming out of the bathroom.

away and strengthen the socialist movement. ~~Sanjay came storming out of the bathroom~~ own political fire dimmed after successive periods of ~~Sanjay came storming out of the bathroom~~ Westminster style of parliament, with the rule of ~~Sanjay came storming out of the bathroom~~ even the welfare state. The road to ~~Sanjay came storming out of the bathroom~~ but that was the image with which he waged his ~~Sanjay came storming out of the bathroom~~ —the last one, the movement of "total revolution" ~~Sanjay came storming out of the bathroom~~ the eventual downfall of Indira Gandhi's powerful ~~Sanjay came storming out of the bathroom~~

"You don't seem to know how to control your ministry," he said loudly. "Can't you tell them how to put out the news even?"

Gujral kept himself under control. "Lock, I'm equally upset, and concerned. But I don't have to give any explanation to you." He brushed him aside politely and went in to see Mrs Gandhi.

He clarified to the PM that it was not possible to forestall the pattern of late news announcements because the slips were sent in to the newsreader while news was being read. At the time of the first broadcast there was a flash about the supreme court decision. For the second broadcast in Hindi more details came in, so more were read out. In fact, the news was rephrased and broadcast again at 4.30 pm. Mrs Gandhi kept quiet.

But the day the emergency was to be declared P.N. Bahl, joint secretary in the PM's secretariat, walked into the news-room of All India Radio at 6 am and took charge. At 6 am Director General Chatterjee received a phone call from Gujral. "Get a team ready to record a message by the prime minister," he instructed. "But don't send it till I tell you."

Chatterjee contacted Station Director Barooah, and told him to rush to office.

At 7 am, Gujral rang again.

"Send the team to the PM's house. The message has to be broadcast in place of the news bulletin at 8."

In place of the news bulletin?

It was then that Chatterjee realized something big was in the offing. But he was in a quandary about whether or not to make an announcement beforehand of the PM's broadcast to the nation. What if the team did not return in time for the 8 o'clock bulletin, he wondered. He issued orders, however, that all services should take the broadcast, and that all stations were to relay it simultaneously. The Hindi team made it just two minutes to 8, followed by the English one. It was in the nick of time. But there was criticism of the fact that a prior announcement about the broadcast had not been made. Sharada Prasad was in touch with the DG but he did not tell him. He told the news-room, so the DG used his own discretion.

But the ministry was Gujral's and Gujral was found "too soft" in his handling of the media, particularly of the press, and very particularly on the night of the emergency. The decision to cut off electricity to all presses, so that there could be no news of the

pre-dawn arrests of national leaders, was not implemented effectively enough even in Delhi itself. Delhi's Fleet Street (Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg) housing the *Indian Express*, the *Times of India*, the *Patriot*, and the *National Herald*, was blacked out, but the *Statesman* and the *Hindustan Times* got away with morning supplements, giving details of the arrests, while the Jan Sangh's *Motherland* which, logically, should have been the first target, brought out a full issue printed at their press in Jhandewalan, an area not covered by "electricity failure."

On 26 June there were a group of friends sitting at Gujral's house in the evening when the call came from the PM's house to come over. Gujral lost colour. At 9.30 pm he was relieved of his charge.

"Anytime now," he thought early the next morning, "they'll come for me, like Chandra Shekhar."

He knew Indira Gandhi had become suspicious of his loyalty. One of the reasons was that he was supposed to have visited Union Minister for Agriculture and Irrigation Babu Jagjivan Ram much too often and too quietly between the vital fortnight of 12-25 June. This was a time when the question of finding a substitute leader was being discussed in the possible event of Mrs Gandhi temporarily stepping down to await the supreme court judgement. Ram was being mentioned around as the obvious choice. Her measure of loyalty had become an exacting one then. "Even if I met him," argued Gujral, "what does it mean? He was a member of her own cabinet, her own minister."

Earlier, she had resented his meeting Dinesh Singh, even socially, but this was more crucial. For her colleagues it created an artificiality in political demeanour which soured personal relationships. "I don't know what her thinking was that she never retained regard for old connections," exclaimed Dinesh Singh, as perplexed as the rest of the then Congress leadership over this prime ministerial trait. "She had not kept up any personal relations in politics, but I have. Panditji never got on with JP but he maintained the connection. Ours is a soft society. It is never easy to engineer a clash."

What Indira Gandhi did was to encourage a code of loyalty with such rigid ramifications that like everything else, these became accentuated during the emergency. Loyalty to the Congress was not enough; it had to be loyalty expressed in terms

of unequivocal personal allegiance to her. Once a mistrust arose in her mind about any of her colleagues, even the ordinary acceptance of a dinner invitation where Jagjivan Ram was to be chief guest, for instance, was interpreted as a sign of disloyalty. Gujral had survived the emergency crisis as well, but only because President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed²⁷ pleaded with her on his behalf. Two days after the declaration of the emergency on 28 June at 9.30 am, he was asked to take charge as minister of state for planning. He was virtually pushed into the backwaters. He did not resign, nor did she relent. In March 1976, he was appointed India's ambassador to Moscow, bruited as the top post in the diplomatic galaxy, but an effective enough instrument, as far as she was concerned, to remove him from politics.

The most controversial intra-play within the Congress Party which symbolized the issues devouring the vitals of the organization was the Indira-Bahuguna²⁸-Kapoor-Sanjay syndrome. Not a single Congressman, belonging to either the pro-Indira or anti-Indira group within the party, fails to mention "the case of Bahuguna" as an example of her relentless pressure against anyone "promising, talented and with a future," even if the person proclaimed unimpeachable loyalty. Gujral had said on repeated occasions that the thing which hurt him most was her doubts about his allegiance, and that any other accusation but this could have made sense.

It has been Mrs Gandhi's contention that those she supported and nurtured invariably let her down. Her natural inclination was to pick the intelligent and the ebullient. Her equally natural fear of being overshadowed made her start distrusting them.

"May be she was not far wrong," commented Chandra Shekhar

²⁷Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed was president of India from August 1974 to February 1977. He died in office of a heart attack. A firm supporter of Indira Gandhi during the 1969 split, and a member of her government thereafter, he was elected to this exalted position in 1971. He signed more ordinances than any other president to date. Educated at Cambridge, he retained an old world charm. He was fond of music and the arts and with Begum Abida, his vivacious wife, made Rashtrapati Bhavan play host to a variety of interesting people.

²⁸Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna was born in Bugani in UP on 25 April 1917. He is seven months older than Indira Gandhi. He became chief minister of UP on 9 November 1973, and resigned on 30 November 1975.

on the subject. "Look at the way they have all discarded her now—particularly her most vociferous companions of the Left. If anyone were to mete out punishment, it is they who should be jailed first."

Chandra Shekhar obviously referred to Barooah,²⁹ Ray,³⁰ and Chandrajit Yadav, but Mrs Gandhi had made as much use of them as they had of her. The Bahuguna episode repeated a set pattern. He was flamboyant, but an organizational genius who functioned on her behalf as general secretary of the Congress in 1969, and earned his reward by being appointed union minister of state for communications. Later, he was installed in UP as chief minister by the Centre with the implicit stipulation that Delhi would wield all the final sanctions.

Hemvati Nandan Bahuguna was a clever man. Clever enough to fall in, and clever enough to bide his time. From pre-independence politics as a student leader in Allahabad University (jailed in 1942), he had grown into a strong, dynamic personality with a flair for being on the winning side. Indira's was the winning side, but the vast expanse of UP politics was an irresistible territory to conquer. Bahuguna did not think the two need necessarily clash. But if he allowed Mrs Gandhi her ascendancy, she was not prepared to allow him his ambition. She felt much the same about him as Kamaraj³¹ had felt about her after he helped

²⁹Sixty-three years old, Dev Kanta Barooah, a friend of Feroze Gandhi and a socialist-minded Congressman from Assam, has a mind that flits from topic to topic with a kind of truant intellectuality. "Any attempt to discuss a party problem, say Congress colleagues, "had to await an eclectic wandering over a dozen unrelated subjects first!" Barooah was union minister for petroleum and chemicals in 1971-73. On 19 October 1974 he was elected Congress president and had to preside over the dissolution of an empire before his very eyes, when the Congress was routed in March 1977. He managed to retain his own seat in parliament, however.

³⁰Born in 1920, Siddhartha Shankar Ray became chief minister of West Bengal in 1971. He was a staunch supporter of Indira Gandhi right through the emergency but was grouped with the Left bloc within the Congress, which she came to strongly suspect as wanting to oust her. His outspoken criticism of her leadership after the Congress debacle had some people suspect him of political opportunism.

³¹Kamaraj Nadar was called the iron man of the Congress. He was chief minister of Tamil Nadu, but made his impact on national politics as Congress president. In 1966 he played a major role in marshalling opinion in favour of Indira Gandhi's candidature for prime minister, as against Morarji. A rough but simple man, Kamaraj evolved a style of common sense politics.

make her prime minister—that pliability has changing shapes.

In 1969, when Babu Jagjivan Ram became Congress president, Bahuguna was general secretary. After the split in the Congress, Mrs Gandhi wanted him to go back to UP. Bahuguna preempted her decision, and inveigled the announcement from Jagjivan Ram that he would retain Bahuguna in the same capacity in the central organization. "Look at him," exclaimed a ruffled Indira, "he's gone and had it announced from there." She was again irritated when she found that in the 1971 Lok Sabha elections Bahuguna had been paying twenty parliamentary candidates more than the amount stipulated by the All India Congress Committee; this was presumably in order to make them "his men." After the elections, on a trip to Rae Bareilly, Bahuguna managed to get a seat on the same plane as the PM. When she suggested that he should become union minister of state for communications, he refused. "You can do something first," she urged. "The promotion will come later." He wouldn't agree.

When she communicated this to Uma Shankar Dixit²² and others at Rae Bareilly, it was Kapoor's comment that planted the first seed of distrust. "He has defied you," he said.

For one month Bahuguna cooled his heels.

Mrs Gandhi was then told that Bahuguna had made Raj Narain²³ file the now famous election petition against her. It was possible that his association was only to emulate C.B. Gupta who

He talked little, but even his silence had a sting. He was a great admirer of Jawaharlal Nehru, but sentiment was not the only reason for the support he gave Indira Gandhi. He thought that as prime minister she would be amenable to persuasion and to his influence. It came as a shock to him that she was not prepared for that. He died on 2 October 1975.

²²Uma Shankar Dixit, now seventy-six, was an old-time minor associate of the Nehrus and was brought into politics at a national level by Indira Gandhi as part of her strategy to surround herself with loyal yes-men. The acme of his career was his appointment as union home minister in 1973-75. Once he started feeling that he really was a man of some consequence, she packed him off to the shipping and transport ministry and then on to gubernatorial insignificance as governor of Karnataka. A lumbering old man, he depended on his daughter-in-law to act as confidant in his years of power in Delhi.

²³Raj Narain, sixty-years old idiosyncratic socialist who has finally made it to the top. He was never taken very seriously till he became the "giant killer" by winning his petition against Indira Gandhi and being indirectly responsible for the events that changed the very fabric of Indian political life. He was president of the All India Socialist Party and is now union

had, as CM, always sought to use the Socialist Party in UP as a pocket party. In fact, Bahuguna had made a frantic call from Lucknow to Delhi the morning the petition was filed.

N.K. Seshan, another close aide, had then contacted Kapoor.

"Bahuguna just rang up the PM. He's told her that Raj Narain had filed the petition and wants to know whether we have got a lawyer on our behalf."

"Till the court sends a summons, we can't do anything," said Kapoor, and added, "Seshan, he's not rung up about the election petition. He wants something for himself."

The PM laughed when Seshan told her of Kapoor's reaction. It was decided to get Bahuguna to Delhi.

"Gurudev," rang out Kapoor's throaty voice over 300 miles that morning to Bahuguna, "*bulau a hai, come.*"

Bahuguna arrived the next day. It was a Sunday. That was the day Indira Gandhi tried not to see anybody. But the insidious way in which the pattern worked, and how egos got involved was, in this case, only a preview of what got distorted under conditions of the emergency.

Bahuguna rang the PM's house. The PA on duty informed Kapoor. Kapoor instructed him to let Bahuguna keep ringing. Every half hour, Bahuguna would ring till it was 7.30 in the evening and he finally lost his temper. "The PM has called me here!" he shouted. "She'll think I haven't come if you don't tell her."

Kapoor had the PA put the call through to him. "Who rang you up?" asked Kapoor.

Bahuguna was thoroughly exasperated. "You did."

"Why didn't you ring me up?"

Kapoor then informed the PM, who said that Bahuguna should first see Uma Shankar Dixit.

"Go and meet Bhishmapitamah,"²⁴ relayed Kapoor to

minister of health and family planning in the Jarata government. He eats with zest, while his favourite recreation of wrestling does not seem to go ill with his own sturdy physique. He has a habit of phrasing his ideas in a way which does less to stimulate thought and more to provide comic relief. "How could she lose to him!" people exclaimed at the time of Indira Gandhi's defeat. She ~~lost~~ ^{lost} to him. Indira Gandhi lost to herself.

²⁴Bhishmapitamah, the sage and adviser of both the Kauravas and Pandavas in *Mahabharata*, the Hindu epic. He was on the side of the ~~Kauravas~~ ^{Kauravas} in the battle between the two, but was known as a strong man ~~who~~ ^{who} could not be flouted.

Bahuguna, using the common mythological reference for Dixit. Humour was evidently not at a discount even in the power game.

When finally Bahuguna got to meet Mrs Gandhi, she offered him the position of minister of state for communications. This time, Bahuguna accepted.

By the end of 1973, Kamalapati Tripathi³⁵ was at a low ebb as chief minister in UP. There were allegations against his son, and general discontent. President's rule was imposed. Elections had to be held. There were continuous meetings at the PM's house. Several suggestions were made, but Kapoor's were the operative ones.

"If you keep Tripathiji, we can't win," said he to the PM.

"Who then?" she asked.

"Make Bahuguna the chief minister."

"You know what he's like," she remarked.

"I know he's a *tikrami* (trickster)," admitted Kapoor.

"You never know what he'll do afterwards," she rejoined.

"He'll be in your hands," said Kapoor. "You can do what you like."

Bahuguna now says that by then Sanjay had begun to make his presence felt in the ministerial sphere, implying that one of the reasons for his ouster from Delhi was Sanjay's unhappiness with him. He recalled having issued a blanket order in his ministry for the transfer of all those who had been in Delhi for over ten years. This hit one of Sanjay's engineer friends whom the prime minister's son wished should remain in Delhi. Bahuguna said he couldn't make such an obvious exception, and the man had to go. "As soon as I left the ministry, the man was back," says Bahuguna. "I never wanted to go to UP even as chief minister."

He had, in fact, been offered the deputy chief ministership,

³⁵Kamalapati Tripathi looks like the *pandit* he is, with a large *tilak* mark on his forehead and all the instincts of the Brahmin. This fetches him an obeisance which is almost extra-political. But nobody could be more shrewd than this old-time boss of UP—nobody, that is, other than Indira Gandhi who had even him playing to her tune. He was chief minister of UP from 1971 to 1973 and was union minister of transport and shipping in 1973. His position as a senior Congressman was rehabilitated only when Jagjivan Ram left, and Indira Gandhi had to fall back on old, trusted colleagues.